

## DMCPS Complaint Process

Families may find involvement in child welfare services stressful and may object to how services are provided by county human and social service departments and DCF's Division of Milwaukee Child Protective Services (DMCPS). Local child welfare and youth services agencies including DMCPS are required to have formal complaint procedures in place and inform requesting persons of the complaint procedure, so they are aware of how to resolve their complaints.

If you have completed the formal complaint process with DMCPS and have concerns regarding how the complaint was handled, you can file a complaint directly with DCF who oversees DMCPS. To view the full statewide policy and procedure requirements, follow this link to the [County Child Welfare and Youth Services Complaint Process](#). This document outlines the steps of DMCPS' complaint process which includes informal and the formal complaint processes.

If you file a complaint, please know that there may be confidentiality requirements which limit what child welfare services case information may be shared with you. Those who are not direct subjects of a CPS report, such as extended family, family friends, foster parents, advocates or other interested individuals, may be limited in the information they can receive and their ability to participate in complaint resolution without authorization to release information by a case participant. If the person making the complaint has a disability or communication limitation, the DMCPS will allow the complainant to have another person participate in the complaint process to assist the person making the complaint.

DMCPS must maintain records of formal complaints and those records must be made available to DCF upon request. For complaints reviewed by DCF, regional office staff will generally request copies of the person's complaint form and the DMCPS response letter(s).

The formal complaint procedure for child welfare services is separate from any appeal processes mandated in statute or administrative rule for substantiation of abuse or neglect, benefit payments or licensure. If you have concerns about maltreatment substantiations, Kinship Care payments, Foster Care payments, or Foster Home licensure, you may seek to use the local agency complaint procedure. However, persons who are entitled to appeal substantiation, benefit, and licensing decisions should do so directly through the designated appeal processes.

In addition, families may have concerns about actions taken by law enforcement, the court, or other non-contracted agencies or entities. Some of those concerns may include court decisions regarding custody, placement, visitation, guardianship, or termination of parental rights. Those complaints fall outside of the DMCPS and you may



be referred elsewhere to resolve them such as directly to the law enforcement agency or your assigned court attorney.

### **Informal Complaints:**

Families receiving child welfare services through the contracted case management agencies or DMCPs Initial Assessment Services may have concerns about the decisions and actions by those agencies. Some of those concerns may include difficulty communicating with a caseworker/provider, not liking the caseworker/provider, or having questions or concerns about a decision made in the case.

The most efficient way to start resolving case concerns is by following an informal complaint process. The informal process is the fastest way to resolve issues and helps develop the relationship between you and your caseworker. The informal process may include talking with your caseworker, another staff person with whom you have been working, or the supervisor. You can contact the contracted case management agency or DMCPs to request a call or meeting with agency staff to discuss your concerns. If you do not receive a response from staff who you've reached out to, it is recommended that you reach out to the next person in the order of contact list below. If you do not wish to use the informal process or have tried to discuss the concerns with the caseworker and/or supervisor and the issues are not resolved, you can use the formal complaint process.

### **Recommended Order of Contact for Informal Complaints:**

Outlined below is the recommended order of contact that would apply to the DMCPs or contracted agency program you are working with:

1. Assigned staff/caseworker
2. Staff/caseworker's Supervisor
3. Program Manager for assigned caseworker and Supervisor
4. Program Director
5. Client Rights Specialist

### **Agency Contact Information**

1. DMCPs: 414-343-5500 or email the [Milwaukee Child Protective Services - Client Rights Specialist](#)
2. Wellpoint Care Network: 414-463-1880
3. Children's Wisconsin: 414-453-1400

If you are unsatisfied with how the Child Welfare Agency handled the informal complaint and want the complaint reviewed further, you may request a first level complaint review

through the DMCPs Formal Complaint Process. You may call the Client Rights Specialist directly at (414) 220-7064 to submit a formal complaint or you may also submit a formal complaint via email using the following link: [Submit a Complaint to DMCPs](#).

### **Formal Complaint Process: First Level Complaint Reviews**

For first level complaint reviews, DMCPs will issue a written initial response letter addressing the specific concerns identified in the complaint within 60 calendar days of when the complaint was received. If a complaint is filed to DMCPs for an issue outside of Milwaukee County's jurisdiction, the Client Rights Specialist will forward the complaint to the correct county.

1. The complainant submits a complaint to DMCPs via telephone, [email](#), or mail. The complainant may use the [DMCPs Complaint form](#).
2. The Client Rights Specialist will acknowledge receipt of the complaint within two (2) business days by contacting the complainant by telephone, email or mail which will include explanation of the DMCPs Complaint Process.
3. The complainant must contact the Client Rights Specialist within two (2) business days of the Client Rights Specialist initial contact to confirm the information in the complaint and to proceed with the complaint. If complainant does not to respond within two (2) business days, DMCPs will close the first level complaint and notify the complainant by telephone, email or mail.
4. Within seven (7) business days of confirmation of the complaint, the Client's Rights Specialist will schedule a meeting with the complaint to gather additional information. This meeting may occur in-person, virtually, via phone, or via email.
5. The Client Rights Specialist will gather information regarding the complaint to understand what efforts were made by the assigned child welfare agency to address the complainant's concerns.
6. The complainant may share any additional information and/or documentation related to their complaint with the Client Rights Specialist.
7. The Client Rights Specialist will work with the assigned child welfare agency and when appropriate, allow the assigned agency to directly address and resolve the complaint with the complainant. If there is no resolution reached, the Client Rights Specialist will coordinate with the assigned agency and complainant until a resolution is reached or the complaint is closed.
8. This process may take up to 30 days. The Client Rights Specialist will issue a written response within 60 days of when the complaint was received notifying the complainant of the resolution and/or closure of the complaint.

If you are unsatisfied with the initial response, you may request a second level review of the complaint. To request a second level complaint review, you must submit a request



by telephone, email or mail within 10 calendar days of receiving the initial resolution response letter from the Client Rights Specialist.

### **Second Level Complaint Reviews:**

Second Level Complaint Reviews will be handled by the DMCPs Policy Initiatives Advisor or other designee on behalf of the DMCPs Administrator.

The identified DMCPs designee conducting the second level review will:

1. Gather information from the case record and agency staff, including the initial written response from the Client Rights Specialist.
2. Allow the complainant to provide information about their complaint. This may be done in-person, virtually, via phone, or via email.
3. Issue a written response to the complainant addressing the specific concerns identified within 30 calendar days of when the second request was received by DMCPs. The 30-day time frame can be extended with mutual agreement by the complainant and DMCPs.

The second level review is the final decision by DMCPs on the complaint. If you remain unsatisfied with the decision made by DMCPs you can request to have [DCF review your concerns](#).

### **Other Complaints/Concerns**

Complaints about a Group Home, Residential Care Center, Shelter Care, or Child Placing Agency, contact the DCF [Child Welfare Facility Licensing](#) section.

Complaint about a foster home provider or guardian, contact the [Foster Care Coordinator](#) for the county where the provider or guardian is located.

Complaint about a kinship care provider, contact the [Kinship Care Coordinator](#) for the county where the provider is located.

For information about how to [Appeal a Substantiation of Maltreatment click here](#)